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A Short History of the Last
Session of Parliament,
with Remarks.

By

Thomas Lewis O'Beirne



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



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A S H O R T
H I S T O R Y
O F T H E
LAST SESSION
O F
P A R L I A M E N T,
W I T H
R E M A R K S.

O'Beirne, Thomas Lewis

— ET CRIMINE AB UNO
DISCE OMNES. VIRG.

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HARDING

THE Period is arrived to which the nation has long looked forward with the greatest anxiety, and earnestness of expectation. The trust vested in their Representatives by the People, is again returned to themselves. They are empowered by the Constitution to require an account of their stewardship from those to whom they had committed the care of their most important interests; and either to confirm them in that trust in approbation and reward of their fidelity, or to punish the iniquity that has abused their confidence, by transferring it to others.

In the People thus determining for themselves in their collective capacity, the thinking part of the nation has of late placed their only hopes of deliverance, from our present state of domestic and foreign ignominy.

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That all the calamities entailed upon this country, owe their origin and progress to the Corruption of Parliament, is a fact that will hardly be controverted. Without that blind and implicit obedience, which the Majority of the Commons have indiscriminately paid to every Administration, under every shifting of Government, through every change and fluctuation of contradictory measures for so many years past, the nation could never have fallen a sacrifice, as it has done, to the ignorance, incapacity and folly, of the most profligate set of men, that ever entailed ruin on the nation they governed.

As the corruption of Parliament, therefore, has been the source of our calamities, the redress of them can only be expected from its restoration to Freedom and Independency. However hopeless the attempt was, of obtaining so desirable a blessing from their own voluntary repentance and atonement, yet it has been made. It was at the time, the only expedient the Constitution suggested. The event is too well known. To their breach of trust, they added mockery and insult. Their treachery to their Constituents, they aggravated by an avowal of their crime, that ended in an accumulation of past injuries. They confessed that they had sold themselves to the purposes of the Crown; that they had joined with its servants in heaping on their country the evils of which it complained; yet, at the same instant

stant of time, they persisted, in conjunction with those servants, to withhold every hope of redress; thus throwing aside even the appearance of shame and decency, and seeming to make a boast of their having plunged themselves into the last sink of prostitution.

What then was left for us, but to wait for the present Period, when the power they had so wantonly abused, should be taken from them; when the People should have their redress in their own hands, and an opportunity would be given them of asserting their own rights, and fulfilling the wishes and hopes of all good men.

To doubt of their disposition to fulfill those hopes, or to confound the national character in the same invective that branded the corruption of Ministers, and the degeneracy of Parliament, has been resented by some as little less than treason against the State. The spirit that broke forth in the late county assemblies, was maintained to encourage this prejudice in favour of public virtue. It grounded a conclusion, that whenever the appeal should be carried to the Freeholders at large, in a manner clearly and unequivocally provided by the Constitution, they would be found as true to their interests, and as incorruptibly tenacious of their rights as the most virtuous and independant of their ancestors.

I will not enter on the discussion of this question. Taken merely as matter of argument,

ment, it would, at best, be useless. All occasion of controversy will soon be superseded by proof. The immediate decision is in the hands of those whose dispositions and principles would give matter to the dispute.

I can only assure them, that this nation never knew a more important or momentous crisis than the present; or one, that, on their parts, called for so much vigilance, caution and integrity. I will even venture to affirm, that on their decision, the Liberties of this country, and all her future happiness or misery, absolutely and finally depend. I will lay it down as a prophetic truth, which derives none of its forebodings from visionary fears, or unwarranted apprehensions, that if by their suffrages, they return to the next Parliament a majority of those men, who for the last six years, have held themselves independent of their Constituents, and acted as the representatives of the Minister, and not of the People, they will set the last seal to their own slavery. They will irrevocably fix the period of their departed Liberties; they will establish the commencement of that æra that sees them reduced to the same degenerate state with so many neighbouring nations, who were once as free as we have been.

A long and hopeless independence of seven years, is to succeed. Fearless of their resentment, and as regardless of their future, as they have been of their past complaints

plaints, their Representatives will pursue their venal course, without fear or controul. And whoever attentively considers the stage from which they are to set out, and supposes a progress in their proceedings proportionate to the changes that have taken place for the last six years, as well in point of national prosperity, as in the temper and dispositions of the People, will find, abundant reason to admit my worst fears, and to form with me the most gloomy apprehensions.

If successful in the present struggle, the authors of those changes will have reason to hold themselves supported by the People. They will not fail to persevere in a system, for which they can so plausibly plead the general approbation. They will maintain that the appeal has been made to the nation at large, and that the majority of the Free-holders hold the same opinions with the majority of the Representatives. That the degeneracy of Parliament was, as it always must be, sympathetic, and the necessary consequence of the degeneracy of the nation; and that by persevering in their attempt to introduce the system of government they have been so long meditating, they only conform themselves to the circumstances of the times, and the dispositions of the People.

I beg, however, it may be understood that I only moot the case, and that my fears are merely supposed. I am myself inclined to hope better things from the collected virtue

virtue and integrity of the nation. It is not possible that they can so soon consent to forfeit the privileges their ancestors bled to preserve to them. They cannot so tamely consent to relinquish a Constitution, the happy fruits of which they themselves once enjoyed in the becoming pride of national glory, in the enjoyment of a free and uninterrupted commerce to every part of the globe, to most of it exclusively, and in the increase and security of private property and domestic happiness.

My only wish is to impress the People with a thorough sense of the great and decisive points on which the friends of this country, and the friends of the Ministry, are actually at issue before them. The pains that will be taken by both parties to influence their votes, will be in proportion to the vast and important consequences that must follow their determination.

But in this contest, the advantages on both sides are by no means equal. On the part of the Minister will be the weight and authority of government, and that all-ruling influence of the Crown, to which all our sufferings are ascribable, the numberless tribe of Placemen, Pensioners, and Retainers of Officers, dispersed through every corner and cranny of the Kingdom, and above all, the command of the public treasures, and all the sources of bribery and corruption—sources by which he has already bought up the virtue and integrity of Parliament, and by which he depends

to be equally successful among their Constituents.

By this last expedient, he will be enabled to employ his agents in the most barbarous and insulting tyranny that ever a deluded People submitted to. He will make them the sellers at once and the purchasers of their own freedom and property. The treasures, which he has levied on their indigence by every oppressive mode of taxation, under pretence of the exigencies of the State, he will lavish in buying from the voters the return of those very men, who assisted him in creating those exigencies, and whose interest it is, as well as his own, that they should increase instead of lessening.

To these corrupt auxiliaries will be added all the arts of falsehood and misrepresentation, and the same causes I have enumerated above will give these also circulation and success. The same calumnies, the same illiberal invectives, the same imputed criminality of motives, with which their hireling writers have been accustomed to brand their opponents, will now be propagated with increased industry. No pains will be neglected, no expences spared from the Treasury, to lead the People into the most fatal of all errors, that of mistaking their friends for their worst enemies, their worst enemies for their friends.

Against those dangerous and powerful engines the friends of the People can only

oppose the importance of their cause, the integrity of their intentions in the prosecution of that cause, and their zeal to avert the dangers that hang over their country. To the falsehoods and misrepresentations of Government, they can only set in contrast a plain and candid state of facts, on which the People may judge for themselves. To offer these is all they can do. If the People are not true to themselves in forming their judgment, and acting in consequence, it is not in the power of any set of men, however zealous and well intentioned, to save them.

To promote so desireable a work is the intention of the following Essay. The Author is of opinion, that nothing can be better calculated to give a proper idea of the respective merits of the parties, who now claim the confidence of the people, than a faithful narrative of the proceedings of the last Parliament, impartially submitted to public consideration.

It is not my intention, however, to follow the Minister and his adherents through the vast variety of matter that has occurred within these last six years. This, in fact, would be no less than to write a complete history of the decline of the most powerful and formidable empire that ever was raised by the virtue and industry of a brave people.

Other States have verged to their fall by gradual and slow degrees. Their foundations

tions have been undermined by progressive evils, almost imperceptible at the time of their influence, and which the industry of subsequent historians was obliged to draw out in a regular series, before they could trace them to their sources.

But in the short space of little more than five years, the men, whom God in his wrath permitted to govern this country, assisted and countenanced by the guardians of the people, have crowded all the calamities and disasters that have oppressed other nations in as many ages:

Shortly after the commencement of the present reign, Great Britain possessed the largest extent of territory, the greatest share of power and opulence, and, in all human foresight, the most permanent state of security and stability of any nation upon the earth. Reputation abroad, and concord at home, distinguished that period as the most splendid and happy this Kingdom had ever known.

Every part of the empire and its dependencies enjoyed a state of perfect tranquility. Our flag flew triumphant and unrivalled from one end of the globe to the other. The house of Bourbon was completely humbled. The family compact, if not really, was at least effectually dissolved. Their finances reduced, and their power, both by land and sea, almost annihilated, they could not attempt to carry its objects

into execution, without exposing themselves to a renewal of all the miseries and disgraces it had drawn after it on its first formation. Our Colonies had attained the full vigour of manhood. They considered themselves as bound to us by the indissoluble ties of common origin, common names, common language, religion, *interest*, and there subsisted, between us and them, the happiest reciprocation of wealth, affection, and power.

The scene indeed began soon to be reversed. A fatal change was shortly introduced into the system of Government, and good men began to form the most melancholy forebodings of impending evils.

But it was reserved to the days of the last Parliament, to adopt the fatal measure that has, in so short a time, effected what it was impossible for the most apprehensive and timorous minds to forecast to their fears.

In 1775, the Nation was plunged into the American war. From that accursed measure, as from the womb of the Trojan horse, have issued all our calamities. The eye turns with horror from the disastrous catalogue. But they press upon our feelings with too importunate a weight to allow our oppressed spirits even a momentary respite—we can no more fly from them than from a tainted and deadly atmosphere that wraps and envelopes us wherever we turn our steps.

Abroad—the Empire dismembered. Its former strength converted into its weakness.—Our Colonies revolted, and forming the bond of union to one of the most dangerous confederacies that ever conspired against the Crown and People of Great Britain *—Abandoned by all our former friends and allies: even those of them, who are indebted to us almost for their existence, driven by the weakness and sottishness of our Councils, with which they would think it a disgrace to connect themselves, into an armed league, for the express purpose of supplying our enemies, and of co-operating with them in the long-wished for opportunity of overthrowing and annihilating our naval power.

At home, an impoverished people, oppressed with accumulating taxes, (to which there is no prospect of either measure or end); distracted councils; factions in the Cabinet, in Parliament, in the Navy, in the Army; loss of all credit and mutual confidence; diminished rents, lands sunk at least one-third in value; daily bankruptcies; discontents breaking out into public acts of sedition and lawless violence; the blood of citizens flowing through our streets in punishment of misguided excesses, to which the weakness and pusillanimity of Government had given rise; the Kingdom absolutely under the discretion and power of a

* See the King's Speech, Nov. 1779.

military force, independant of the Civil Magistrate *; an universal face of distrust and dismay, and fearful expectation of some decisive calamity, for which, in the confession of all parties, our actual situation should induce us to prepare our minds.

These are facts of equal shame, grief, and notoriety. There is not an individual who does not feel their truth in the utmost extent of their most baneful consequences; and it would be an insult on the common sense of the nation, to suppose that they stood in need of any exhortation to rescue itself from the treachery of a set of men, who co-operated with a weak and profligate Administration, in tumbling it from the height of glory and affluance, into such a gulph of misery, poverty, disgrace, and almost final ruin.

To enter into a detail of all the blunders on the part of Ministry, and the servile indiscriminate compliance on the part of the Commons, that has reduced us to this melancholy situation, would, as I have observed, be impossible from the urgency of the present moment. I shall therefore, confine myself to a brief narrative of the pro-

* At the time of the late riots in London, an order was issued out for the Military to act, without waiting for the authority of the Civil Magistrate. The violence of the rioters, and the remissness of the magistrates, rendered such an extraordinary stretch of the prerogative necessary. But Ministers greedily seized this opportunity, and extended the orders to every part of the kingdom, though such necessity existed in the capital alone. Those orders have not as yet been formally recalled.

ceedings of the last session. Most of the great events, that mark its features, will come home to the feelings of the People. They belong to their cognizance in a very peculiar manner, as immediately relating to the most declared and acknowledged duty they had a right to command from their Constituents. They alone are sufficient to answer all the salutary purposes which this essay is designed to produce.

But before I enter on the subject, it may not be amiss previously to state the situation of things, when the sixth session of the last Parliament was opened by a speech from the throne. The conduct of the majority of the Commons will thereby be more clearly illucidated, and their merits more fully understood by the People.

The disgraceful campaign of 1779, had just closed, and men had time to collect their thoughts, and to review the dangers they could scarce believe they had escaped. The combined fleets of France and Spain, the junction of which Ministers had not taken a single step to prevent, had retired into port, after having swept the channel in triumph for several weeks, and spread terror and dismay along our coasts. A strong easterly wind and an epidemic disorder, that desolated the crew of every ship in their squadron, had rescued us from their menaces, and frustrated their intended scheme of invasion. To these providential circumstances alone, it was acknowledged by all parties,

parties, we were indebted for our preservation. The enemy found the whole extent of our coast unarmed and unprovided. Plymouth, to which they directed their first attempts, was naked, defenceless, and uncovered. The fleet of England had been ignominiously chased up the channel, and compelled to take shelter in its own harbours*. Squadrons of privateers infested every part of the coasts of the three kingdoms. They spread terror through all the maritime towns, and captured our merchant ships, even in sight of the shore. All trade was at a stand. Our manufactures were equally affected, and the lower orders of the People crowded the streets idle and unemployed. The merchants would not venture to ship off their goods, while the channel was filled with the cruisers of France, Spain, and America. The traders and dealers of the maritime counties were fearful of sending the commodities they purchased of the farmers, by sea, and were thereby prevented from circulating them, as they were accustomed to do, by the cheap conveyance of water-carriage. Those who did run the risque, did it under the disadvantage of an unheard-of insurance. This

* The squadron under Sir Charles Hardy, remained at Spithead, till the retreat of the enemy. It was then ordered to put to sea, at the risque of being dispersed and scattered by the storms that prevail at that season, and this to answer no purpose, but the purpose of an empty parade, and to amuse and delude the public.

afforded the freighters a pretext of buying them up at the lowest rates, while at the same time it raised the markets to which they were sent, as it was paid back by the purchaser in the increased prices they cost him. The consequence was a failure of rent among the farmers, bankruptcies among the lower tradesmen and artisans, an universal distrust and loss of credit. The distresses into which those evils naturally reduced the landed gentlemen, joined to a monopoly of money, by those who negotiated the loans for government, reduced the value of lands from thirty-five and forty, to twenty-five, and twenty years purchase*.

Our accounts from abroad were all of the same disastrous tenor. The Portugal trade remained locked out the whole summer. The Mediterranean and Levant trades were utterly gone. The Newfoundland fishery was nearly demolished. The East India trade had taken refuge up the Shannon as far as Limerick. There it remained for ten weeks in constant terror, till being rescued at length by the voluntary retreat of the enemy, it got into port, with the loss of one fourth of the squadron, wrecked near the Isle of Guernsey.

Our West-India merchantmen had, indeed, arrived in safety; but so unexpectedly, and in a manner so contrary to all

* In one of the best counties in England, an estate was sold last year for eighteen years purchase.

human calculation, that Ministers themselves were compelled to attribute the event to the goodness of Providence alone.

From the West-Indies, every day brought over the news of some fresh disaster. Dominica captured—St. Vincent wrested from us—and Grenada once more reduced to the dominion of France. If St. Lucia avoided the same fate, it owed its safety to the gallantry of Colonel Meadows*, and to the skill and intrepidity of Admiral Barrington, who, with four men of war and a few frigates, was left, *in this second year of hostilities with France*, exposed to fourteen sail of the line, under Monsieur D'Estaing.

In America, that grave of English valour and of English glory, things wore, if possible, a still more unfavourable aspect.—Rhode Island had been evacuated, and this only safe retreat † for our men of war, from Halifax.

* This gallant officer, who has been foremost in every action since the beginning of the American war, is still a lieutenant-colonel on the English establishment, while half-pay lieutenants, and clerks in office, are at the head of regiments.

+ New-York is by no means a safe harbour to make. Exclusive of the shallowness of the bar, on which, with smooth water, and gentle winds, sixty four gun ships have often struck, there are very few points of the compass from which large ships can run for it in a storm. The North-west, which are the prevailing high winds, blow directly out of the bay; and supposing a large fleet to be surprized by a gale from the South-east, a good way within the large bay that is formed by the East end of Long Island, and the Capes of the Delaware, without daring to attempt the bar at Sandy-Hook, it would be

Halifax to the West-Indies, relinquished to the enemy, whose fleets are now riding there, unopposed, and meditating hostilities against our devoted army. All active, offensive operations were suspended. The whole attention of the immense force collected at New-York was taken up in preparing for its defence, and guarding itself from being surprised by an army, which this infatuated country was made to believe did not amount to five thousand men.

Ireland was in a state little short of rebellion. Administration continued to turn a deaf ear to her reiterated complaints, in breach of the public faith pledged to her the former sessions; and her associated corps were then determined to extort, by force, the redress she had solicited in vain as a mark of favour.

The very Ministers were quarrelling among themselves; and as it generally happens in such cases, their iniquitous secrets had been divulged by some of their own body. Lord Gower, who had acted with them most steadily, and with the most forward zeal, and who had supported them through so many dirty measures, had, *a few*

be scarce possible for them to avoid the shoals of Barnegat. Not one of these difficulties can be applied to Rhode Island. The whole navy of England might get in there with any wind, and ride there in safety. Yet the nation is told that it has cause to triumph, because we have relinquished that place to get possession of Charles Town, which a frigate cannot approach with safety.

days before, relinquished his seat at the Council Board. The habitual indolence and inattention of the Minister, and his criminal neglect, which, he asserted, it was impossible to find words to express, were the reasons he assigned for his resignation. These he further strengthened by a public declaration from his seat in Parliament, that he could no longer act with such men with honour or conscience. To concur in their measures would be infamy, and a crime against his country, too much even for him to submit to *.

I beg of my readers that they would carefully attend to this detail of facts, and especially to the last circumstance. I have already given my reasons for thus particularly enumerating them. The Representatives of the People, who at such a moment, and after such a declaration from the very President of the King's councils, could continue to vote with the authors of these complicated calamities, and to give them a blind and implicit unenquiring support, can surely have little hopes of escaping the execration of their Constituents at this time of general account.

* This Nobleman was one the most forward and sanguine among the Ministry for enforcing hostile measures against the Colonies. He has lived to see his error, and, as far as a public acknowledgment goes, has made atonement to his country; yet a majority of the Representatives of the People continued to support an obstinate perseverance in that reprobated measure.

Such,

Such, however; was the perilous situation of our affairs both abroad and at home when the Minister presumed to meet the Parliament. The defection of his colleagues, the loud cries of the public, the consciousness of his own inadequacy to the place, the conviction he must have felt that all the miseries of his country were solely to be ascribed to the ignorance and imbecility of his councils, seemed to have no weight with him. Secure in the numbers of his venal supporters in both Houses, which he had previously calculated, he equally set at defiance the clamours of the people, and the inquisitive indignation of the virtuous and patriotic within doors.

The immortal Pitt, in all the pride of his most brilliant successes, never met the great Council of the Nation, to congratulate with them on their victories, with more confidence than this man assumed, with such a load of national censure, and national calamity on his head.

T H E A D D R E S S .

The Address, which he had the audacity to get proposed in the Upper House, set out with calling on the Peers to express their *conviction* of the *blessings* we enjoyed under his Administration. Let the reader but recollect the time, the circumstances, such as I have just described them ; and then form a judg-

a judgment of those Lords, who, through the person of their Sovereign, voted thanks to the Minister for procuring *such blessings* to the Nation.

The remainder of the address was pretty much the same in both Houses. It was, as usual, an echo to the speech, an eulogy on Administration, and an unbounded promise on the part of the Commons, to levy on their Constituents whatever supplies an avowed prosecution of the same ruinous measures that had caused our misfortunes, should call for.

It was to no purpose that the gentlemen of the Opposition, reminded the Representatives of the People, of the sacred duty they owed to their Constituents. In vain they asked them if they considered that the awful moment was approaching, when they should be called upon to give an account of their stewardships. With what face could they appear before their Constituents? Could they inform them for what purpose they had pledged themselves to levy additional taxes, on a People already groaning under a debt not much short of one hundred and fifty millions, and which when the unfunded debt, and the expenditure of the succeeding year were added to it, would be little short of two hundred millions, requiring an annual interest of eight millions and a half? What reasons would they assign for supporting a set of men, under whose baneful auspices, we were reduced to that extremity of distress

tress, which the speech acknowledged? Would they say that they supported them because the glaring absurdities, the criminal omissions, and scandalous inconsistencies of their Administration, had raised the ** most dangerous confederacy, that ever was formed against the Crown and People of Great Britain*; because notwithstanding the immense sums that had been voted to the different services, far beyond the utmost extravagance of any previous time, they left the kingdom so unprovided and defenceless, *that nothing † but the intervention of Providence could have frustrated the designs and attempts of our enemies to invade it.* Would they say that they supported them, because their own colleagues, speaking like men willing to make some atonement for their errors, and beholding such things as were transacting among them, declared, that they could no longer be present at their councils with honour or conscience? What would they tell their Constituents had become of the Americon war? Ministers had passed it over in the silence of death. Neither in the Speech, nor in the arguments of those who were instructed to move the Address, was there a single word dropt upon the subject. Were we to sit down content with the loss of the many millions, and the rivers of blood shed by our brave countrymen, which it had already cost the nation? Or was it still

* Vide King's Speech.

† Ibid.

to continue to drain away the strength that should be turned against our natural enemies? They could not inform them. The Minister had not condescended to take the least notice of it.

What excuse would they tell them, had the Minister himself alledged to the House? By what palliatives did he cover his own crimes? "I have always acted to the best "of my understanding. If my measures "have failed, they can at least plead the "merit of goodness in my designs, and in- "nocence in my intentions. The perils with "which we are surrounded are not the fault "of my Administration. They are owing "to the ingratitude of the powers confede- "rated against us. Am I to blame if the "Colonies be disloyal; if France be ambi- "tious, and if Spain be a dupe? I wished to "have prevented the junction of the French "and Spanish fleets. I knew it was the only "measure that, under any human agency, "could possibly save us from destruction. "But the French had the sagacity to know "my wishes. While the fleet of England "remained at anchor at Torbay, Monsieur "D'Orvilliers slipped out from Brest, and "sailed to Cadiz."

These were, in fact, the chief, nay the only arguments made use of by the Minister to repel the attacks of the opposite side of the House. An unblushing avowal of his ignorance, his incapacity, his inactivity, was his only plea to favour. "*He acted to the best*

best of his understanding." His crime was his defence, and it was remarked that he urged it with such insolence as nothing but the venality of Parliament could have inspired him with. He had previously taken care to render his defence, whatever it might be, unanswerable. The majority of the Members had sacrificed, at the Treasury, all the sacred obligations they owed to their Constituents.

It is worthy of being observed to the Freeholders, on this occasion, that during the whole debate on the Address, not one Englishman opened his lips in approbation of the Minister or his measures, except the Secretary at War, and he only spoke in answer to accusations urged against himself. Two Scotch advocates, one of them now a Peer, and at the head of one of the Courts of Law, and a Gentleman of the same country, who in consideration of some military preferments, which he has since received, was that very day enrolled on the Treasury-list, were the only persons who openly stood up for the first Minister of England, in the Parliament of England, at a crisis when measures that tended to her very existence were under deliberation. But, alas! what do I talk of deliberation. The Minister scorned to ask the advice of Parliament, even at so perilous a crisis. The *form* of the approbation of the Majority, to the measures he had already *determined* on, was all

he called for. They could not refuse him his own. He had bought it at a price *.

I R E L A N D.

Towards the close of the last session, the distresses of Ireland had become the subject of parliamentary attention. The 11th of May, on a motion of the Marquis of Rockingham, an unanimous address was voted, recommending to his Majesty's most serious consideration, the distressed and impoverished state of the loyal and well-deserving People of that kingdom, and praying that such steps might be taken, as should tend to promote the common strength, wealth, and commerce, of his Majesty's subjects in both kingdoms. The following day his Majesty returned a gracious answer to this address, and promised to give directions to comply with the prayer of it. A considerable time elapsed however, and not a single step was taken by Administration in this important and pressing business. The recess was at hand. The clamours of the People of Ireland became more loud and vehement, in

* "A sullen Majority," said one of the Country gentlemen, " silent within doors, loquacious without. In every other place, but in the House, to the amazement of all speculative politicians, condoning the measures, and execrating the men whom they came there to support." — Would to God that so shameful a record could be concealed from the knowledge of foreigners, and the researches of our descendants.

proportion as their distresses increased, and their hopes of redrefs appeared more remote. It was evident to the most inattentive observer, that some effectual remedy should be immediately applied, or that the most fatal consequences were to be apprehended from the despair of a brave People, reduced to such a state of calamity and distress, as was experienced by no other nation that ever existed, unless scourged by war, pestilence, or famine.

Upon this shameful contempt of the recommendation of Parliament, and this breach of assurances solemnly pledged by the servants of the Crown, a motion was made on the 2d of June, restating the necessity of giving speedy and effectual relief to Ireland, and intreating, that if the Royal Prerogative vested in his Majesty, was not adequate to administer the necessary relief, he would be pleased to continue the Parliament of this kingdom, and give orders forthwith for calling the Parliament of Ireland. To induce the Minister to concur in this motion, all the consequences that afterwards took place, were predicted and set in the strongest colours. He was told that he was already considered by the People of Ireland, as having declared open hostility against their country. He had thrown out, by his sole influence, a trifling favour, which before his coming down, and opposing it with all the energy of his eloquence, as well as authority, the Commons seemed disposed to grant them. If to this he

would add a contempt of the united wishes of the British Legislature, and persevere in refusing them relief, there was no foreseeing to what fatal excesses, their indignation and despair might transport them. The example of America, was set before his eyes. He was exhorted not to drive this only surviving child of Great Britain into similar circumstances, or compel her to extort as a right, what she wished to receive as a favour. But nothing could rouze him from his obstinate inactivity. He indulged his lethargic indolence in the security of his influence and numbers. The Parliament of England was prorogued. No orders were sent to convene the Parliament of Ireland.

From this unfeeling inattention to the distresses of that kingdom, and this contempt of its possible and natural resentments, the Minister proceeded to a renunciation of its Government. He refused them protection in the hour of their greatest danger, and virtually released its inhabitants from their allegiance.

Spain had acceded to the French and American confederacy. Both channels were overrun by the fleets of the Allies. Ireland, as well as England, was threatened with invasion, and the enemy had actually begun to insult her maritime towns. In this emergency, she applied to Government for protection. But alas ! the gallant troops that could have avenged her cause upon her invaders, were wasting their strength in the wilds

wilds of America, in the prosecution of a cruel and savage war, against her fellow-subjects. She received from the Minister, the answer that was returned to our ancestors, on a similar application to the Senate of Rome; “ You must arm in your own defence, we have not the power to protect you.”

Thus was the Government abdicated, and the People abandoned to their fate. But they were not wanting to themselves. They found in their national bravery and virtue defence, not only against the arms of their foreign enemies, but against the fatal effects and complicated evils of mal-administration at home; of calamity entailed upon them by tyranny without hopes of redress; of iron-handed power without protection. They exhibited a political phænomenon. They transformed weakness into strength. From the lowest ebb of national misery and public dependency they suddenly rose into the fullness of vigour, spirit, and ability to command a redress of all their grievances.

Forty thousand men, completely armed, regularly disciplined, selected from the nobility, gentry, merchants, citizens, and respectable yeomanry, clothed, furnished, and maintained at their own expence, first secured their country against its foreign enemies, and then united their efforts in compelling that justice with arms in their hands, that had, as with America, been denied to humble applications, and the repeated representations

presentations of their misery and distress. They peremptorily insisted upon that redress which they had before supplicated.— Their demands were enforced by the points of forty thousand bayonets.

Yet amid this scene of danger, while this spirit of resistance looking towards independency, dictated the resolves of every meeting of the Associators, and peremptorily controuled the deliberations of the Great Council of the kingdom, the Minister, to whose shameful inattention and criminal neglect in the first stages of the discontents, it was solely imputable, still remained undecided and inactive. He confessed that he had never properly turned his thoughts to the subject. He was ignorant of the danger, and consequently was unprovided with a remedy. He hesitated, protracted, shuffled, nor was it till the 13th of December that, baited and goaded on by the importunate attack of the friends of their country, he came down to the House, and directed his creatures to acquiesce in whatever propositions Ireland might think proper to demand. Whether those propositions were derogatory to the glory, or contrary to the commercial interests of this Kingdom ---- or whether they would throw too great a weight into the scale of Ireland, was then no time to consider. There was no longer any room for deliberation. Ministers had let the moment pass when the respective rights of the two countries might be deliberately

rately adjusted, and when Ireland would have rested content with indulgencies far short of what she was fairly entitled to expect. The exigency of the moments, thanks to our wise and provident rulers, left no other alternative but an implicit acquiescence or another civil war, and no sacrifice could be thought too great that, in our present situation, would prevent a dissolution of the constitutional connexion between the two countries.

During the whole of this important business, the majority of the Representatives of the People, as usual, followed the Minister through all his shiftings and windings, contradictions and inconsistencies. They watched over him in the slumbers of his indolence and inactivity—they stood by him in his starts of peremptoriness and obstinacy. They denied when he refused; when he relaxed, they granted; they gave their sanction to his measures before they were put into execution, and they screened him from censure when their baneful effects became notorious, and called not only for redress but punishment.

It is impossible to read the account of this important business without calling to mind the beginnings of the unfortunate contest with America, and comparing the conduct of Ministers towards the two countries I find this done in so masterly a manner in the substance of Mr. Burke's Speech, on the 6th of December, published in Almon's

mon's Debates, that I shall content myself with transcribing it for the benefit of my readers.

" Ireland spurned at the British claim
 " of dominion ; she looked upon herself
 " free and independent. A mob had rose
 " in Dublin, and non-importation agree-
 " ments had taken place. Why not, as
 " was the fate of Boston, shut up the
 " Port of Dublin ? Why not burn Corke,
 " reduce Waterford to ashes ?---Why not
 " prohibit all popular meetings in that
 " kingdom, and destroy all popular elec-
 " tions ?---Why not alter the usual mode of
 " striking juries, as was done by the Mas-
 " sachusetts Bay Charter Bill ?---Why not
 " bring the Dublin rioters over to this
 " country to be tried by an English jury ?
 " Why not shut up their ports, and pre-
 " vent them from trading with each other ?
 " Why not prescribe the principal lead-
 " ers, who hold commissions, not under the
 " Crown, but by virtue of the free elec-
 " tion of the very corps which they com-
 " manded ?---Why not put them out of
 " the King's peace, and declare the whole
 " Kingdom in rebellion ? The answer was
 " plain and direct. Ministers dare not.—
 " Sad and dear-bought experience had
 " taught them the folly, as well as imprac-
 " ticability of such measures. The danger
 " of the present awful moment made in-
 " solence and arrogance give way to fear
 " and humiliation."

ARMY ESTIMATES, &c.

In the midst of the debates on this imminent danger, to which the nation was exposed from an interior convulsion, similar to what the fatal measures of Administration had raised in America, the business of the supplies was carried on as usual. The majority of the Representatives of the People, heedless of the distresses of their Constituents, were voting away their money without measure, account, or enquiry. To such a height of insolence and effrontery had their security in the venal support of Parliament elated the Ministers, that the Secretary at War openly assigned, as a ground for his application for the enormous land-force he meant to have paid, what amounted to an impeachment of the First Lord of the Admiralty. That Minister had, from his seat in Parliament, confessed, that a person in the office he filled, who should not always have in readiness a fleet equal to the combined force of the house of Bourbon, deserved to lose his head. Yet his worthy colleague, Mr. Jenkinson, did not hesitate to inform the Commons, that the necessity of augmenting the army arose from the alarming inferiority of our fleet*, and its consequent inability to give that protection and

* Here the Secretary at War assigns the *weak state* of the navy, as the cause of the great supplies required for the army. Lord North, on opening his Budget, informed

and security, either to the Kingdom itself or its dependencies abroad, which, in all former wars, had been derived from that establishment. The forces to be employed he stated at 179,500 men; and for their pay and cloathing, he demanded no less a sum than 4,130,000 l.

A military establishment, that so infinitely surpassed whatever had been heard of before in this country, spread a general alarm among those gentlemen who had invariably opposed the system that had reduced us to a state, which called for so enormous a force. Not that they objected to raise the required numbers. The exigencies of the times, however created, might make the measure necessary. But the Country Gentlemen, in particular, were loud in calling on the House to consider, before they gave their votes, how far it was wise and politic to agree to the estimates; how far the remaining resources of this oppressed and impoverished country, were adequate to the support of the unparalleled expence, which they would occasion.

As to the policy of agreeing to them, it was urged, that it would be the utmost ex-

formed the House, that it was the *greatness of our navy establishment* that devoured the resources of the country, and to that he principally attributed the enormity of the last year's expences. In such contempt do Ministers hold the understanding of Parliament! So heedless are they of the language in which they address them! Thus do they all join in sporting with the sufferings of their country!

travagance

travagance of political insanity, for this country ever to rely on any other security or mode of defence, than that of a proper naval force. A defence, which our insular situation, and the experience of all past times, pointed out to Great-Britain as her natural security. To confess ourselves weaker on that element to which we owed all our wealth, glory, and importance, as the Secretary at War had done, and to acknowledge with him that we were incapable of remedying that weakness, by any other means, than that of a land army, was the most alarming and afflicting intelligence, that Parliament ever conveyed to the nation.

As to the inadequateness of the nation to support the expence, if there were any who were not blind to what stared every man (except those who wilfully shut their eyes) in the face, they might soon be convinced from the forcible testimony of decreased rents, ruined farms, and bankrupt tenants. The deserted fields, the towns empty of manufacturers, and swarming with soldiers, and the gaols crowded with reduced tradesmen and farmers, would afford the most melancholy and irrefragable proofs of the general poverty and distress.

But if the exigencies of the times compelled the Representatives of the People, to vote the estimates as they stood, they were called upon at least, not to vote them precipitately, or without examination. Before they gave away so enormous a sum of the money of their Constituents, they should

at least know to what objects such a force would be directed; what use was to be made of it, or how far it was applicable and adequate to effect the great purpose of the war, the obtaining a speedy and honourable peace. They should be assured that the strictest œconomy should be observed in the expenditure, and that no part of that sum, or of the enormous extraordianries and contingencies that would be tacked to it, should be plundered from the Public by ruinous contracts, usurious Jobs, and all the douceurs with which Ministers purchased support and influence, out of the public purse.

These, and such like arguments, were pressed upon the House with all the warmth of zeal, and the energy of eloquence. But to the questions that were proposed to the Ministers to obtain the wanted information, they returned a sullen silence; or if they were so closely pressed as to be compelled to rise, and say something in their defence, they were not prepared;—they had not brought their papers;—they were not responsible.—Their creatures called for the question, and the small, though urgent voice of the Friends of the People, was drowned by the clamours of the Treasury-Bench*.

MID-

* In the course of this debate, Mr. Townshend called on the Secretary at War, to assign a reason why the expences of the staff for the present year, should be 82,000l. while the staff of that glorious year 1762, was but 69,000l. He thought the House had a right to ask in the

MIDDLESEX ELECTION.

While the Trustees of the Public Purse, were thus sacrificing the interests of their Constituents to the favour of the Minister within doors, he was himself no less active without, in attempting to violate the most essential of their rights in the free choice of their Representatives. On a vacancy for Middlesex, Mr. Byng, an independent Gentleman of the county, was called upon by the declared sense of the Freeholders, to offer himself a candidate in the room of their late Member. To comply with their desires, it was requisite that he should vacate the seat he already held in Parliament, and with this view he applied to the Minister for the nominal place of the Chiltern Hundreds. On this application he received a letter from the Minister, informing him that he had already given a vacating seat to a Member of Parliament who meant to offer himself for the County of Middlesex, and that he could not give another.

The Gentleman, to whom this preference was given, was Col. Tuffnel, Member for Beverley, and a creature of the Duke of Northumberland, Lord Lieutenant of the

the name of their Constituents, on what grounds this excess of 13,000l. should be voted. The answer received from the Secretary was, that he did come down prepared on the subject, and therefore could not satisfy the House. The same answer he repeated the next day, and there the matter has rested.

County.

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County. It was known at the time, and the event has placed it beyond a doubt, that this candidate was brought forward in direct opposition to the wishes of the Freeholders. Yet by refusing to *give* a vacating seat, as this great arbiter of our privileges, expressed himself, to the object of their choice, the Minister seemed determined to compel the Electors to accept him.

Here was an avowed and barefaced attack upon the Freedom of Election beyond the utmost insolence of all former Ministers. It was no secret intrigue managed in the dark, by concealed agents, and under-hand instruments, but a direct, formal, open robbery, on the most valuable franchise, the subject can boast. If the attempt had been crowned with success, we should not have had even a hope of safety left. The precedent would have been established. Administration would have claimed a prescriptive right of discharging from the service of his Constituents any member whom they might please to favour, and of deciding who should offer themselves to the Electors, for their choice.

But fortunately the attempt was made on a body of Freeholders, whose independent spirit has, on all occasions, set an example to the Kingdom of the most commendable zeal and activity in the preservation of the first and dearest of their rights. They spurned at the combination that had been formed against them, and as they could not have the candidate of their wishes, they prevailed on a Gentleman of the most approved

proved worth and disinterestedness to step between them and the creature of the Minister, and they returned him unanimously *.

As soon as Mr. Wood took possession of his undisputed seat, he preferred a petition to Parliament, complaining of this injury that had been offered to one of the most essential and undoubted rights of the People. This petition contained a direct and formal charge against the Minister by name. It accused him of a wanton and arbitrary abuse of powers, which, if not wholly usurped, had, in many instances similar to the present, been exercised to the utter subversion of all free election. It was signed by a long list of the most respectable Freeholders. The greatest part had, indeed, refused to set their hands to it. They conceived it to be a useless attempt to address themselves to Parliament even on so notorious and crying an invasion of their rights, and the subsequent conduct of the House justified the imputation. They screened the Minister from censure; they refused the Freeholders redress.

* It appeared that the whole of this business was a juggle between Col. Tuffnel and the Minister. His Lordship had never given him the Chiltern Hundreds, nor had he ever vacated his seat for Beverley. In the course of the debate it appeared, from the testimony of Mr. Byng, that a man, who had been condemned to death for coining, had been respiteed because he promised to procure the Treasury fifteen votes, in case of a contest, while a poor woman, who was under sentence for the same crime was, for want of such interest, burnt.

OECONOMY in the PUBLIC EXPENDITURE.

At the time that this question took up the attention of the friends of their country within doors, a new scene was opening without that promised to produce the happy Reformation, to which alone it is on all hands agreed, the Nation can be indebted for its safety.

The daily accumulating distresses of the country began at length to open the eyes of the Public to the scandalous profusion with which all our affairs were carried on, and the necessity of a strict and parsimonious œconomy in every department of the State. It was evident that the evil so frequently foretold, and so anxiously dreaded by the friends of the Constitution, had unfortunately happened in our days. We had only to read the Journals of the House to be convinced that the Crown had acquired such an irresistible weight of pecuniary influence, as to buy up all Public Virtue, and to turn the Constitution against itself. Parliament seemed to meet for nothing else than to establish grievances, and sanctify them into laws. They voted every measure that was proposed to them, without a shadow of information, or the most distant enquiry into their tendency; they engaged their country in wars, without once examining into their justice or expediency; they lavished away the money of their Constituents without measure or account. The Court had but

to

to propose, and those creatures of its power acknowledged no other duty but to approve and support. Freedom of Debate, was become a term of mockery. Reason and argument, were held in equal contempt with Patriotism and Public Virtue. Even facts of the greatest notoriety were voted not to exist, and grievances, the most public and acknowledged, were proved to be blessings, by the more than almighty fiat of a majority of votes.

In vain did a few independent members in both Houses, attached to the Constitution, endeavour to oppose this torrent of Corruption. Obstruction seemed but to increase its violence. The more ardent and spirited were their attacks on Administration, the more lavishly did these disperse the crown treasures in the purchase of fresh mercenaries to fight their battles. What then remained for the People but to take their cause into their own hands ? To examine by themselves into the origin of their sufferings, to trace the national calamities to their real sources, and instruct their Representatives, in the forms allowed them by the Constitution, to procure ample redress.

The zeal and indefatigable industry of some of the leaders of Opposition, had greatly contributed to convince the People of the immediate necessity of such interference.

On the 7th of December, the Duke of Richmond moved the Lords to present an humble Address to his Majesty, beseeching his Majesty to reflect on the manifold distresses and difficulties in which this country

is involved, too deeply felt to stand in need of enumeration, and to represent that, amidst the many and various matters that required reformation, and must undergo correction before this country could rise superior to its powerful enemies: the waste of public treasure called for instant remedy. Among the many instances of increasing profusion that came out in the debate on this motion, were the following. The expence of foreign embassies, in the glorious reign of King William, was about 43,000l. in the present, they had swelled to the enormous sum of 90,000l. In the most expensive year of the last glorious war, under the councils and auspices of the immortal Pitt, secret service money never exceeded 237,000l. from the present accounts they amounted to about 280,000l.

But the great discovery to the Nation, of the shameful neglect and scandalous profusion of the present Government, and all the secrets of contract jobbs, army extraordinaries, and contingencies, was made on the 15th of December, in the House of Lords. By a deduction of facts and reasoning, that forced conviction on the minds of the most venal and interested, the Earl of Shelburne, on that day, enforced the baneful consequences that have flowed to this country from the boundless pecuniary influence acquired by the crown; the wanton dissipation of the public treasures in all the wicked modes of corruption; the shameful profusion in all the public offices; the enormous

enormous annual increase of the army extraordinaries, voted as things of course, without enquiry or account; the ingenuity of the Minister, in creating new employments for his instruments at the public expence, and his barefaced devices for enriching his favourites with pensions drawn from the industry of an impoverished people.

On the comparative proportion between the extraordinary military services of the late war, with the present, he stated the following alarming facts.

In the year 1757, the expences were but 800,000 l. those of 1777, including the transport service, were 2,200,000 l.

In the year 1762, when our arms were borne triumphant to every quarter of the globe, when we had a force of eighty thousand men in Germany, besides victorious armies in North America, in the British and French West-Indies, in East-India, in Portugal, on the Coast of France, at the Havannah, the extraordinaries did not amount to more than two millions. In the disgraceful campaigns of 1778 and 1779, they amounted to upwards of three millions each year: yet it was well known, that œconomy was not the distinguishing virtue of the Earl of Chatham.

From these facts he made it appear, that in the four last years of disgrace and defeat, the very extra military expences would form no less a sum than eight millions and a half: a sum very nearly equal to the whole expenditure of the four first years of King William.

William, and fully equal to the two first years of the great Marlborough's immortal campaigns.

In dragging to view the shameful arcanae of jobbs and contracts, he pointed out the difference between the conduct of former Ministers and the present. During the last war, it was thought sufficient to employ one contractor; the present First Lord of the Treasury multiplies the number to twelve. So many different friends are obliged by this expedient; so many assured votes are added to his influence,

During the last war, the Contractor was obliged to furnish provision on the spot, in America, at sixpence a ration, including all expences. What was the bargain with the present Contractors? To deliver rations at the same price in *Cork*. Freight, insurance, risque, all was taken from the pockets of the public, and bestowed upon the friends of the Minister. Forty thousand pounds were paid to one man, a Mr. Gordon, for superintending the loading of the provisions on board the victualling ships *.

From among the Favourites on whom the Minister lavished the plunder of the Public, Mr. Atkinson was particularly brought forward. In the last four years, that gentleman's contract amounted to one million seven hun-

* This man charged no less a sum than 500*l.* for carting, though the merchants in Cork loaded the lighters at their warehouse doors; nor was a single car or cart ever used for the purpose. This fact must not have been known to his Lordship, as he made no mention of it.

dred thousand pounds. One of these was made for five thousand hogsheads of rum, at a price actually double to what it could be purchased for on the quays of London. A committee of merchants, trading to the West Indies, had examined this Contract, disapproved it, and reported accordingly to the Commons; yet not a single step had ever been taken to make the fraudulent Contractor refund. On the contrary, he was again trusted by the Minister, and continues to receive greater favours than any other of the tribe.

Mr. Alderman Harley, was next distinguished. This gentleman had transmitted to America, no less a sum than three millions seven hundred thousand pounds, for the use of the troops; yet, in pretending to account for it to the Commons, he had not produced a single voucher. The paper he presented, consisted of statements of such capital sums as forty and thirty thousand pounds in a lump, without any specification whatever, how or in what manner, or to what use they were applied.

When it appeared that millions were thus issued from the Treasury, without any restraint or controul, and that the Representatives of the People neglected to require the least account of them, was it to be wondered at, if the army extraordinaries should have become, what the noble Earl called them, the Civil List of the Minister, and filled up the bottomless gulph of secret service-money? Could it be any longer a secret

cret from what source the venality of Parliament drew the purchase of its pliability and subserviency to the Minister of Finance? Could there be a doubt to what cause we should attribute the calamities, which a profligate Administration had been enabled to entail upon this country?

The prodigality of the Commons in their blind and unconditional grants to the endless claims of the Civil-list, to fallacious estimates, arbitrary extraordinaries and contingencies, supplied matter for the prodigality of the Minister. They granted in order to be paid. Their boundless profusion was at once the cause and effect of that enormous influence of the Crown, to which all our grievances are to be attributed. It was a fund of corruption, that multiplied as fast as the exigencies, real or pretended, of the state required, an addition of taxes and impositions. Under its encouragement, the very errors of Administration, and the ruinous consequences of the measures pursued by an iniquitous Minister, widened the circle of his influence. The enemies he armed against his country, the possessions of which he stripped her, the resources he cut off, and alienated from her for ever, furnished him with new claims to oppress, to impoverish, to exhaust her. He laid his rapacious hands on her with impunity, because the fund to which he owed his safety was increased by his rapaciousness, and his crimes, while they accumulated, became his security.

After having conveyed such fullness of infor-

information to the House, Lord Shelburne was well warranted to call on all the friends of the Constitution to join with him in checking an evil, which, in the present dangerous posture of affairs, threatened the State with immediate dissolution. Well might he conjure them to join the men, with whom he was connected, in adopting a system of rigid œconomy suited to our impoverished condition. But, alas ! how could he hope for success in the result of such a motion within those polluted walls ? How could those, who toiled for the same purpose among the Commons, hope for it ? Fenced in with the very places, pensions, contracts and emoluments, which their system undertook to save to the Public, the Ministers *voted* their accusations to be groundless, without attempting to refute them, and *proved* their own innocence, by setting their face against every proposal for an enquiry.

While this important question was debating among the Lords, Mr. Burke was zealously engaged in pleading the cause of the People before their Representatives. He lamented that the desire of some œconomical reformation in the public expenditure operated every where but where it ought to operate most powerfully. Those to whom the Constitution had entrusted the exclusive management of the public purse, were the only persons who did not seem to have turned their thoughts that way. The cry for œconomy resounded in the streets and high ways. These complaints of the People were

an accusation against their Representatives. The Lords had taken the lead, and the propositions lately made by the Duke of Richmond, and those which were that very day making by Lord Shelburne, were a reproach to them.

From Administration, not a single expression had dropped on this subject of œconomy ; they had not even thrown an oblique hint which glanced that way. Industry and ingenuity were put to the stretch to find taxes to support the war. The Minister suggested, planned, adopted, yet, in all his begettings and adoptings, in all his schemes practicable and impracticable, he never once thought of Oeconomy.

Our enemies might have instructed him better. The war, on the side of France, was a war of œconomy, the most dreadful of all wars. Monsieur Neckar, the French Minister of finance, could boast that he had brought his fixed and certain expences to an equilibrium with his receipts. In those fixed expences, he reckoned an annual sinking of debt. For the additional services of the war, he borrowed only two millions. He borrowed not for perpetuity, but for lives ; and not a single tax was levied on the subject to fund that loan. The great fund, from which he meant to draw the interest, was œconomy, improvement of the public revenue, and the abolition of unnecessary places.

The propositions towards our enemy in the other House had been rejected by Ministers. There was every reason to fear they

they would equally combat every proposition of the same tendency from the Commons. But though they opposed, what it was their duty to promote, and what their place gave them the power of effecting, yet the important business would not be left unattempted. It should be brought into the House. He should himself submit a plan to the consideration of Parliament after the recess, that would partly tend to satisfy the wishes and desires of the People. He should be supported by a set of men in both Houses, to whose union this system formed an indissoluble cement, and who would strenuously and unanimously direct all their labours to the same desirable end. The defect of power should be made up by fidelity and diligence. They relied on the assistance of the People; if they were not true to themselves, it was not in the power of any set of men, however zealous and well inclined to save them.

The accumulating sufferings of the People, and the loudness of their clamours, extorted from them by the oppressive grievances under which they laboured, gave undoubted assurances of this support. The Genius of England began to stir itself in the North. The attention of the whole kingdom was directed towards its motions. It dictated the resolutions of the assembly of the Free-holders at York, and its animating spirit soon diffused itself through most of the counties of England. A deep and universal alarm seized Ministers and their adhe-

rents. They were attacked in their strong hold. The contest was not only for their safety, but for their lives. All the forces of government were called out. Their emissaries were dispersed through every part of the country. Power and falsehood, interest and misrepresentation, threats and promises, went hand in hand, through the kingdom, to corrupt, to divide, to mislead, to weaken, by any and every means, to defeat a combination, that threatened to rescue the nation from their hands. In some counties, they acted by their agents ; in others, they toiled in person. Rewards were held out to the zealous, threats to the luke-warm, and punishments to the * refractory. But the success fell far short of their strainings and stretchings, in this favourite cause

* The Lords, Pembroke and Carmarthen, were removed from their places for their conduct on this occasion. A Nobleman of a different character, who exerted all his powers to defeat the Petitions, has been since rewarded with one of those places, the abolition of which he opposed with such prudent zeal, he is now *Treasurer of his Majesty's Household.* After this, let the tools of the Minister presume to impose on the Public by invidiously attributing the zeal of Opposition to their envy of the places enjoyed by the friends of Administration. The one labour night and day, they exert all their interest to abolish those places ; the others unite all their personal powers, all their influence to preserve them, and in reward, enjoy them at the expence of an impoverished People. The abolition of those places is an indispensable condition, without which the leaders of Opposition have refused to undertake the government (*for the offer has been made to them*) ; the preservation of those places is a necessary requisite to the continuance of the present Ministry.

of corruption. The sense of the public misery, and the feelings of the People, bore down even their almighty influence. By the meeting of Parliament more than one hundred thousand Freeholders had petitioned for an immediate reformation in the public expenditure. The Table of the House of Commons presented a spectacle that could not fail of being highly grateful to every Englishman. It was restored at length to the pious uses for which it was raised by our ancestors. It was become once more the Altar of the People. Piled with their sacred instructions, the nation looked up to it, as to the shrine, from which alone they expected their salvation.

The first of the Petitions that made its way into the House, was the Petition of the Freeholders of the county of York. It was presented by the most incorruptible hands that ever conveyed the grave and solemn sentiments of an assembled People to their Representatives. The importance of the subject, and the anxious expectation of an oppressed Public, had drawn together the fullest attendance of Members and strangers that had ever been known. We were struck with a new (and for many years) an unhoped-for scene. It made its impression even on the Treasury-bench. We lost sight of that haughty, confident air, with which they had so long been accustomed to survey their Band of Mercenaries.

A deep silence, and a fixed attention prevailed on both sides of the House, and inspired

the most trifling minds with awe and respect, when Sir George Savile rose, and laying his hand on the Petition, expressed the sentiments of 8000 of his Constituents.

The object of their prayer was an enquiry into the public expenditure. The diminished resources and growing burdens of the country, had convinced them that the strictest frugality was indispensably necessary in every department of the State. They long had observed with grief, that notwithstanding the calamitous and impoverished condition of the Nation, much public money had been improvidently squandered; that many individuals enjoyed sinecure places, efficient places with exorbitant emoluments, and pensions unmerited by public services, to a large and still increasing amount. The danger resulting from this evil to the Nation was not confined to the mere bad consequences which must necessarily flow from unbounded profusion; it was the source of that unconstitutional influence of the Crown, which, if not checked, might soon prove fatal to the Liberties of this country. They appealed to the justice of their Representatives, to whose custody the national purse was in a peculiar manner entrusted, and they intreated them, that before any new burdens were laid upon the country, effectual measures might be taken by the House, to enquire into and correct the gross abuse in the expenditure of the public money; to reduce all exorbitant emoluments, to rescind and abolish all sinecure places and unmerited

unmerited pensions ; and to appropriate the produce to the necessities of the State in such manner as to the wisdom of Parliament should seem meet.

" These (said Sir George) are the great
 " objects to which 8000 of my Constituents
 " expressly instruct this House to direct
 " their immediate attention. They are re-
 " presented calmly and with moderation.
 " Nothing is said of the conduct of Minis-
 " ters ; no strictures are made on their past
 " measures ; the most pointed care has been
 " taken to shun all appearance of party.
 " They ground their application on the too
 " manifest and acknowledged calamities
 " with which the Nation is surrounded.
 " They do not take upon themselves to dictate
 " any particular mode of enquiry or redress
 " of the grievances of which they complain.
 " They do not instruct Parliament where
 " they are to go, or what particular steps
 " they are to take. They only expect, from
 " the wisdom and integrity of the Repre-
 " sentatives of the People, that they shall
 " not be put off with palliatives, excuses,
 " shuffling artifices, partial expedients. ---
 " Mock enquiries will not answer their ex-
 " pectations.

" Ministry I know, continued he, will
 " not dare to refuse to give the petition a
 " hearing. But it may be an easy matter,
 " with such Ministers, to hear a Petition,
 " while they secretly resolve not to comply
 " with the prayer of it."

Before I proceed to give an account of the subsequent proceedings of Parliament, and of the shameful and flagitious expedients, the palliatives, the excuses, the shuffling artifices, the partial expedients, by which the Minister verified the hints thrown out by Sir George Savile on the success of this and the other petitions, I shall briefly state some concomitant circumstances that are essential to the proper information of the Public.

The Petitions intreated, that before any additional taxes should be levied on the country, an enquiry should be instituted into the expenditure of the produce of those already laid. The Minister began his imatical opposition, by declaring his intentions of postponing every consideration of the Petitions to that of ways and means for raising the supplies. When Ireland had applied for a redress of her grievances, she began by voting a short money bill. Till her prayer should be heard, and her petition for a free trade granted, she refused to raise any further supplies. This conduct was admired, applauded by the Minister, and he granted her demands in reward of her public virtue. But the People of England had, it seems, no claim to such indulgence. There was one law for the Associations of Ireland, and another for the Assemblies of the Freeholders of England. But the difference was obvious—The *Parliament* of Ireland adopted the language of its Constituents;—the Parliament of England,

land, it was well known to the Minister, would sacrifice their Constituents to his continuance in office.

I have already hinted at the alarm into which the first report of the Petitions threw the Ministry and their adherents, and the various arts and unconstitutional attempts they made use of to defeat their designs. Among these, the most daring was the removal of the Earl of Pembroke and Lord Carmarthen from the employments they held under the Crown. This event took place some time after the present period; but I shall take notice of it here, that it may not interrupt the narrative of the business of the Petitions.

The Marquis of Carmarthen, a young nobleman of the greatest hopes, was Lord-lieutenant of the East Riding of York, and Chamberlain to her Majesty. But he possessed those places with that spirit of Independence, with which nice principles of honour, and an attachment to the Constitution may naturally be supposed to inspire a young man, the dignity of whose sentiments was equal to the high rank he was born to fill in the State. He would have thought himself disgraced by any mark of the royal favour, that would require the sacrifice of the duty he owed his country. When, therefore, he began to weigh with himself the miseries that hung over these Kingdoms, should the measures pursued by the present Servants of the Crown continue to be supported, he resolved to withdraw from them,

and

and to unite with the men, to whom he envied the boast of having uniformly opposed a system of which he had not, till then, perceived all the ruinous effects. To the disgust, occasioned at Court by the avowal of these intentions, was added a public letter, written to the Chairman of the Yorkshire Petitions, wherein he expressed his approbation of the principles of the County Petitions, and the conviction he felt of the necessity of the reformation they were designed to effect. The consequence was the resignation of his Chamberlain's Staff, and his immediate dismission from the Lieutenantcy of the East Riding.

The ancestors of the Earl of Pembroke had been Lord's Lieutenant of Wiltshire ever since that office was known in England. His Lordship was remarkably popular in the County, and his conduct, upon all occasions, had been such as to merit that popularity. But he voted, on the 8th of February, for Lord Shelburne's motion, for a commission of public accounts, and in a few days after he was removed from his employment of Lord Lieutenant, without receiving any reason whatever for such a mark of his Sovereign's displeasure.

The severest marks of disapprobation, under the influence of the present Councils, could be no disgrace to men of their high spirits and elevated stations. But they deeply resented the blow that was struck through them at the dignity of Peerage, the freedom of debate, and the independency of Parliament.

But the mischievous councils of the minister looked much further than even this daring attempt on the independency of parliament. The militia was originally instituted as a constitutional force, and pointed to two objects; to be a defence to the Kingdom against our foreign enemies, and that this defence might be composed of men not immediately dependent on the crown and its ministers. But the constitution of it had of late years undergone a total change. Unqualified persons had been permitted to serve, merely as mercenaries, in consideration of pay and rank. Instead of the men drafted from the different parishes, substitutes had been received, and continued to serve beyond the three years for which they had engaged. Additional companies had been raised in most counties, exactly in the same mode, and on the same terms that regulars beat up for recruits. The militia by these means differed very little from the standing army; one only security was left to the kingdom; the controul of the lieutenants of the several counties. In dismissing these two noblemen from that office, the minister had taken the first step to withdraw that security also. If lieutenants were suffered to be dismissed, merely for their political principles, and for exerting that inherent right of the constitution, of speaking with freedom, and voting according to their conscience, pretences would never be wanting, as they could be continually created, for displacing possessors of that great trust of one

description, and replacing them by others of more pliant principles. By these means it would be a much less difficult task to manage the militia than the army ; and the minister would find the provincial force much more subservient to his wishes than the established.

One would have imagined that an attack on the very vitals of the constitution, of such complicated guilt, and extensive dangerous tendency, would have united the whole body of the representatives in imprecating censure on the advisers of it ; but the Commons did not make a single effort to interpose the authority of the people. The independent Lords, indeed, inveighed in the Upper House against so direct and formal a violation of their privileges, with the indignation it deserved. They moved a vote of censure against the advisers of so dangerous a stretch of his majesty's prerogative ; but as usual, they found corruption and influence too powerful a match for the pride of birth, dignity, and consequence. They were outnumbered, and the minister was protected, even in so glaring an instance of arbitrary and unconstitutional proceedings, by ninety-two peers against thirty-nine.

The last measure of the minister which I shall consider under this head, is the *protests* which he laboured to procure against the petitioners. The methods he employed to induce the deluded people to sign these instruments of their own slavery, would form

as black a page as any in the records of his infamous administration.

The very principles of the protests was a renunciation of the first privilege of an Englishman,—the right of petitioning parliament. They declared the exercise of that right to be unconstitutional. They branded the meetings held for the purpose of exercising it, with the imputation of sedition and rebellion. Every mean, invidious, oppressive expedient of force and artifice, threats and allurements, were put in practice to procure numbers to sign them. Letters were sent round to every man connected with administration, desiring him to stay away from the county meetings, and to exert all his influence in preventing the attendance of others: a conduct the most dastardly that ever men, in the hour of their timidity could stoop to; —that betrayed a base fear, a conscious dread of enquiry; the influence of which could arise only in meanness of heart.

On some the protests were passed for the petitions. By this shameful imposition, many were beguiled to set their names to them, who afterwards declared that they would have lost their right hand, rather than have signed a protest against a petition praying for œconomy.

How different were these protests from the petitions? the petitioners, with all decency and respect, carried their complaints before their representatives. From them alone they supplicated redress; from their legal inter-

ference alone they hoped for relief. They made thier grievances known in the face of the legislature, according to the established modes of the constitution, in a form that would necessarily procure them a *public* hearing. But what was the conduct of the protestors? How did ministers direct them to proceed? (for the measure originated from the cabinet.) Did they apply to parliament? Did they offer any counter petitions? Did they specify any reasons why they thought the prayer of the petitions should not be granted? The very attempt to offer their protests to parliament, was scouted by every side of the house, as an object of the most palpable scorn and contempt*. Mr. Smith however, *reluctantly, yet* in obedience even to so small a part of his electors, proposed to read this protest to the house. The minister himself was the most hearty in joining in the laugh, that the very attempt instantly spread from the speaker's chair to the Treasury-Bench, from the Treasury-Bench to the Gallery.

By this it too plainly appeared, that those insidious instruments, hatched in darkness and privacy, produced in corners and bye-ways, fed by cunning and menace, were meant to have effect, not within doors, but without. It was but too obvious that they were meant not to convey to parliament the sense

* It was in the case of the Nottingham petition, signed by six of the burgesses.

sense of their constituents, not to quiet the minds of the moderate and peaceably inclined, as was pretended, not to carry proper information to the throne, but to raise the flames of sedition, which ministry affected to dread ; to spread abroad that seditious spirit which* ministers had the audacity to impute to the favourers of the Associations ; to divide the people into parties and factions, and to arm them against each other ; to deceive parliament, to impose on the sovereign, and to keep the genuine cries of his oppressed subjects from reaching his ears.

Mr. Burke's Bill for regulating the Civil List.

The first attempt that was made in the House of Commons, to obtain the object of the county petitions, was, on the eleventh of February. On that memorable day,

* Lord Hillsborough, in a transport of that furious zeal that first denounced the vengeance of administration against the devoted colonies, and tore asunder the ties between the two countries, branded these humble and dutiful petitions of the people, to be relieved from the heavy burthens under which they laboured, *as factious, and founded merely in a spirit of violence and party.* The constitutional meetings for conveying the sentiments of the constituents to their representatives, he maintained to be *dangerous, disloyal, seditious combinations, evidently tending to rebellion.* Lord Mulgrave used nearly the same language, but added, that the *promoters of them should be punished with justice, but without pity.*

day, memorable as long as integrity shall challenge veneration, or talents command applause, Mr. Burke introduced his plan for the better security of the independance of Parliament, and the œconomical reformation of the civil and other establishments.

This was not a dream of speculation, a phantom blown up to dazzle and deceive. It was calculated “ to include in its execution a considerable reduction of improper expence; to effect a conversion of unprofitable titles into a productive estate; to lead to, and indeed almost compel a provident administration of such sums of public money as must remain under discretionary trusts; to render the incurring debts on the civil establishment, which must ultimately affect national strength and national credit, so very difficult as to become next to impracticable*.”

But

* The Earl of Shelburne had, on the 8th of February, introduced his motion for a committee of accounts. But ministry threw it out by a majority of 101 to 55. The minority lords entered, on this occasion, the strongest protest that ever appeared on the books of the House. It is signed by thirty-five of the wealthiest, and most distinguished peers of the realm. It contains a statement of the melancholy grounds on which the motion was framed, and the reasons for pressing it upon the house. It records the most palpable instances of the profligacy and profusion with which the public treasures have been lavished, without examination or accounts. It answers all the objections that were urged against the motion, in the course of the debate, and will remain for ever an authentic

But what this eloquent speaker, and incorruptible statesman “ bent the whole force “ of his mind to, was the reduction of that “ corrupt influence, which is itself the pe-“ renial spring of all prodigality, and of “ all disorder; which loads us more than “ millions of debts which takes away vigour “ from our arms, wisdom from our coun-“ cils, and every shadow of authority and “ credit from the most venerable parts of “ our constitution.”

The moderation and candour, the extent and variety of information, the depth of judgement, the perspecuity of reasoning, and the elegance of manner with which this plan was introduced, extorted the warmest and most unreserved applause, even from his enemies. I mean, from the enemies of his country; for they alone can be enemies to this truly great and amiable man. The minister was himself the first to extol it above all the possible productions of the most brilliant characters within the circle of his knowledge. But under the insidious veil of this unbounded approbation, he concealed the design he has since unhappily executed, of defeating all the salutary purposes of the plan.

authentic monument of the degeneracy of the present House of Lords, who could deny their bleeding country the relief this motion held out to it; and who could sacrifice their duty to the defence of a set of men, against whom such crimes and misdemeanors were thus authenticated?

plan. He honoured the whole of the propositions it contained, with an effusion of compliments; but when each distinct part came under consideration, he opposed, he condemned, he rejected it; and though in the progress of the bill he suffered a few of the clauses to pass at different stages, he afterwards took care, when he had compleatly triumphed over the decency and honour of the house, to have them thrown out.

Sir George Savile's Motion for the Pension List.

This plan of Mr. Burke's was followed on the 21st of the same month by a motion of Sir George Saville's to address his Majesty, that he would be graciously pleased to give directions, that there be laid before the house an account of all subsisting pensions granted by the crown during pleasure, or otherwise; specifying the amount of such pensions respectively, and the times when, and the persons to whom such pensions were granted.

This motion went directly to the great object of the petitions of the people. They had prayed that pensions, unmerited by public services, all sinecure places, or efficient places with exorbitant salaries should be retrenched, and the savings appropriated to the public service. But without an authentic list

list of the persons enjoying such pensions, it would be impossible to appreciate their respective merits, or obtain the information necessary to comply with the requisitions of the people, in the full and manifest sense of their application. There could be no other means of gaining a certain knowledge of the sums squandered away in that scandalous traffic.

This motion gave rise to one of the most extraordinary debates that ever was heard in a legislative assembly. As it will afford one of the strongest criterions by which the people can judge of the conduct of their representatives, it will be necessary to be more particular and circumstantial in my account of it.

The Minister had neither the virtue to acknowledge the justice of the motion, nor the courage to reject it. It went so clearly and decisively to the prayer of the petitions, that he did not dare to get rid of it by an absolute and unqualified negative. He was at the same time desirous of giving his creatures some colourable excuse, for supporting him in so positive an opposition to the demands of their constituents. He therefore moved an amendment, which seemed to pay some attention to the requests of the people, but which in fact, defeated all the salutary effects that could be expected from the motion, as it came pure from the mouth of the virtuous mover, and unadulterated by this state-craft.

He was called upon to submit to the consideration of Parliament, a list of *all* pensions, and he proposes, by his amendment, to produce two, which he says, must content the people.

What were those lists? the one was the list of pensions payable at the Exchequer. The other is the private pensions, or what he called, Lord Gage's List.

The amount of these, he said, had been already presented to the House, on an application to Parliament for an encrease of the civil establishment.

In the list of private pensions, he refused to specify names; they lay at the public office, they might be seen by any one who chose to apply for them.

He refused to specify the seperate sums, as paid to individuals; the total amount must satisfy the Parliament and the people. If there were any abuses, any improper persons, or any sums undeservedly granted, to be found on either of the lists, the gentlemen of the opposition should point them out, and not *suspect* where they could not *arraign*.

These were what the minister was pleased to call his unanswerable arguments against the motion; let us see on what grounds they stood.

The virtuous and independent among the representative body, agreeable to the instructions of their constituents, call for information. The minister, with all the appearance of candour

dour and condescension, tells them they shall have it; but how will he acquit himself of this promise? he will give them such information as they have already had, and which they consequently do not want. For this information had been already given, and the two lists he proposed to produce at the request of the people of England, had been laid before Parliament on an application of his own, for an encrease of the civil list.

But the information which could alone satisfy the doubts, and meet the expectations of the people — the information that could alone bring properly to light what, or if any individuals enjoyed sinecure places, efficient places with exorbitant emoluments, and pensions unmerited by public services, that they should not have. Nay, one of his oratorical supporters, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, had the audacity to declare, in the full hearing of the house, members and strangers, that the petitioners did not want that information. Words could not be more precise or explicit, than those which the petitioners had used to recommend such an enquiry; yet this gentleman, with all the fire of his zeal, did not hesitate to affirm, that if they were called to the bar, they would, one and all declare, that the pension-list was not one of the objects of their complaints. How low, abject and servile must the representatives of the people have been in the eyes of that man, to encourage him to offer such arguments to them by way of influencing their votes!

‘ But why not produce the names of the private list ? said the friends of the people.’—

It would not be right. It would not be delicate.—It would be subjecting the pensioners to the slanderous comments of news-paper writers, and the dealers in scandal. Their honor and their peace of mind might be destroyed, by so unfeeling a discovery. So tenderly did his Majesty’s confidential servant feel for the *honor* of his pensioners ; but for the people of England he had no feelings. The miseries of the public could not be redressed, they should be eternal, if they could only be removed at the expence of the peace of mind of *his* friends.

“ But there was no necessity to produce them ; if the people wanted to be satisfied, “ they might apply to Lord Gage’s office, “ and there they should find them.”

So contemptible were the unanimous petitions of the people of England, in the estimation of this insolent minister ! to gratify their wishes, he would not even condescend, officially to submit to their representatives, a list which he insinuated, might be procured by any unauthorized person who would take the trouble to call for it. The wishes of the kingdom at large, might be gratified by so trifling a mark of his attention ; yet he exerted all his powers, he called together his most trusty adherents, and fought at their head, as for his very existence, to prevent being compelled to grant this indulgence.

If the names on that list were such as should command the approbation of the public ; if they were such as had indisputable claims on the gratitude and liberality of a generous nation, for services performed ; if there were no fears that any should be found among them, who blushed not to add to their princely fortunes some miserable stipend, squeezed from the toils and sweat of the people ; if there were none who received the infamous wages of a silent vote, without the shadow of a merit, or even a pretence of public service ; if there were none who could be suspected to have been hired* to libel every friend of the people, to turn every thing that should be held sacred and venerable by Englishmen into ridicule, to brand all pretensions to patriotism, or the love of ones country with mockery and scorn, openly to attack the most invaluable liberties of the subject, and to revive, under the reign of a Brunswick, the arbitrary doctrines and high prerogative principles of a Stewart—If the minister had no fears of this nature, why not produce the list ?—The people would be undeceived—The odium that was meant to be brought upon his *immaculate* administration, would recoil upon those who devised it.

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* No less a sum than one thousand pounds a year, are paid *in pensions* to the editor and established writers of the Morning Post.

He proceeded—“ The sums are trifling.
 “ They are no object—They should be less
 “ than nothing in the estimation of a great
 “ and wealthy people.”—

But to what did these arguments tend? To the giving a negative to every separate article as it occurred in the detail of this important business, and so effectually defeating the general reform. But how did he prove that the sums were trifling? Did he dare to aver that these were the only lists which ingulphed the treasures of the public? Where was the list drawn up in darkness, and under all the terrors of shame and guilt, which was no sooner presented, approved and discharged, than it was committed to the flames, and the very ashes of it scattered abroad to the winds—The list of those members of parliament, who, at the end of every session received the wages of their servile acquiescence to ministers, and their treachery to their constituents? How many were there at that instant in the house, whose criminating eyes would meet the minister's if he attempted to deny the existence of such a list?—Where was the list of secret service money? Where was the list paid from the privy purse? Were the sums to which all these amount, *trifling*, and below the attention of a great and wealthy people?

Or was the amount of these sums the only consideration that induced the freeholders to demand a general reformation. Were there no

no constitutional considerations blended with their requisitions for oeconomy? Did the abolition of the dangerous and destructive influence which the minister purchased by those pensions, trifling as they were, form no part in the object of the county petitions? Was the sum to which Mr. Hampden was taxed for his portion of ship-money, the only motive that induced him to resist that unconstitutional imposition?

Such was the main purport of the arguments on both sides, when a majority of the house supported the amendment of the minister, and enabled him to refuse to gratify the wishes of the people, or to grant them even a hope of redrefs. The worthy member from whom the motion originated, disclaimed it with its amendment. It could not convey to his constituents the information, he thought it his duty to procure them. It could furnish no grounds for obtaining for them that relief which was his object in making the motion.

The Minister's Commission of Accounts Bill.

This motion of Sir George Saville being thus disposed of, a bill was introduced, in consequence of the petitions, on *a* side of the house, from whence nothing could be expected, but that scene of deceit, fallacy, and collusion, to which the only measure that has been granted even in pretence to the prayers of the people.

people gave rise. Col. Barré had given notice to the house, that on a certain day, he intended to bring in leave for a bill to appoint a commission for an investigation into the expenditure of the public accounts. He meant it, he said, as an essential part of that reform, which was the object of the county petitions, and he was in hopes it would tend to the same salutary purposes which his friend, Mr. Burke, proposed to the public by the plan he had exhibited.

He entreated the concurrence of the minister, he shewed him his plan.—It had his approbation—He promised it all the support of his authority, and the assistance of office*.

Yet to the utter astonishment of the house, in a manner unprecedented in the annals of parliament, by a device which would have disgraced any man who pretends to the character of a gentleman, the minister came down

Col. Barré, in the course of his speech, on the 21st of March, gave a most striking account to the house of the trick and imposition, with which this business was managed. “ I called upon gentlemen said he, in the respective offices at the Exchequer, and pressed expedition in making out the accounts called for. I called at the auditor’s ; they directed me to the chamberlain, the chamberlain to the pells, the pells to the teller’s, and so on *ad infinitum*. When I endeavoured to make myself understood, they respectively stared, and seemed surprised, and alternately shifted me off from one to the other, till I was inclined to believe that the request I had made of the noble lord, was only agreed to in order to render me ridiculous to the clerks in office.”

down on the second of March, and proposed a commission of accounts, framed by himself for the purpose of this enquiry.

Several circumstances had concurred to compel him to adopt this insulting measure. The loud voice of the people had begun to make an evident impression within doors as it had done without. A formal and declared opposition to their requests might shake even a power more firm and established than that which the obsequious complaisance of parliament had enabled him to acquire. He had just discovered a defection in a quarter from which he had long derived an authoritative support. The shameless inconsistency and unblushing duplicity of his conduct, joined to a consideration of the fatal consequences of his measures, had given disgust to the speaker, and that able and experienced senator had thrown all the weight of his abilities and knowledge into the scale of the people.

In these circumstances, a commission of accounts with retrospective powers to enquire into past abuses, and consisting of great and independent characters, without the magic circle of his influence, boded the most fearful consequences. If he suffered the gentlemen who favoured the wishes of the people to introduce a bill for that purpose, they would have the power of prescribing the objects of the enquiry, and proposing the members who should compose the com-

mittee. Nothing, therefore, was left for him but to take the measure into his own hands, to introduce a bill bearing a specious title, and seemingly in compliance with the prayer of the petitions. Thus at once to steal some little popularity, and guard against the apprehensions he had so justly conceived on the first proposal of the measure.

Thus what he was fearful of attempting by force, he effected by stratagem. But what could the Sicilians hope, when the redress of their grievances was consigned to Verres? What prospect of relief was left to the petitioners when their cause was thus snatched from the hands of the honest members who had introduced their petitions, cherished and supported them, to be insolently taken up by a set of men who had repeatedly spurned and contemned them as factious and the base spawn of sedition? How could they hope to have their grievances examined into, and redressed by the very men who contended that they only existed in the distempered visions and frantic ravings of popular madness?

This solemn mockery of the public was received by the majority of the representatives, as all other mandates of the minister have been received. We have seen it carried into execution; we have heard it claimed as a merit by the minister; it has been urged as an incontestable proof of his willingness to hear the people. But how does the matter really

really stand? Parliament has consented to delegate the most sacred trust they had received from the people, into the hands of the creatures of the minister. They have submitted to the most intollerable insult that was ever offered to the Commons of Great Britain. In the most debasing manner to themselves, and with the utmost injustice to their electors, they have suffered their best privilege to be annihilated.

The constitution had vested the inspection of the public accounts in the representatives of the people exclusively. By this act of the minister's, it is transferred to a set of men, of whom the people have no knowledge, in whom they can have no trust, of whom they can have no bond of security, no seal of certainty that they will faithfully and honestly discharge their duty. By thus betraying the confidence reposed in them by their constituents, they have parted with half the power of the purse, and the transition from this to the giving up the power of *voting* the public money, is not very difficult.

In the first stage of the bill, the minister pledged himself, that the persons he would nominate should have neither place, pension, nor employment. Yet the very first man whom he dared to offer to the house, was a creature of his own, possessing an employment under him. Not even the insolence with which the servility of parliament had inspired him, could persevere in this attempt.

But though he consented to withdraw the name of Mr. Bowlby *, yet the list, which has been confirmed by the sanction of both houses, presents an authenticated violation of his faith, and an irrefragable testimony of that corrupt influence, to which Parliament has sold the glory and interest of their country.

In the system lately adopted for the regulation of the army ; men have been taken from the desk and placed at the head of regiments. In appointing the commissioners, they have been taken from the head of regiments, and placed behind the desk. General Carleton, whose great military talents might have been happily exerted in the service of his country, has been recalled from his command in Canada, with every aggravation of ill usage and insult. But to make him amends, he is put at the head of a commission, that requires a turn of talents, and a line of practice to which, from his former habits he must be an utter stranger. Add to this, that he is himself very largely concerned in the accounts he is appointed to inspect.

Expedition in settling these accounts, would be one great means of giving satisfaction to the public, and this the minister professed he had himself in view when he formed

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* Mr. Bowlby has, since that time, been appointed commissary general to the army. A good encouragement to the rest of the minister's list, who have been confirmed by Parliament ! are not these things palpable ?

ed the list of the commissioners. Yet he has entrusted it chiefly to Masters in Chancery. If the method to which these gentlemen are accustomed in making up their own accounts be adopted by the rest of the commissioners, there may not be a single vestige of this constitution left by the time it can be expected that they will complete their business.

Can such a commission be called not only a commencement of œconomy, but an ample and satisfactory compliance with the petitions of the People? Can such a commission put an end to the abuses originating from the influence of the crown? Can it check the profusion of the public expenditure, and can it prevent the impositions of contractors? In what does it end? In altering the constitution, and robbing Parliament of its inherent rights. In increasing the influence of the Crown, by creating new dependants on the minister. In enabling him to defraud the public with greater security and ease, by empowering him to appoint stewards, dependant on himself, to cheque and controul his accounts. In creating a new board, and instead of lessening, increasing the expences of the state.

Contractor's Bill.

The corrupt influence which the Crown has acquired in Parliament, was one of the principle

principle subjects of the complaints of the people. To restrain it, was the only way left to save the constitution, and rescue the state from ruin, and no method that could tend to effect that salutary purpose was left unattempted by the friends of the country. Among the most obviously necessary of those attempts, a bill was introduced into the House of Commons early in the sessions, for excluding contractors from being members of that House.

In the midst of a war in which nothing, among all its unhappy circumstances, was more remarkable than the prodigality with which it was carried on, it was evident that the corrupt supply of military arrangements tended, in a very extensive degree, to increase the Court influence in Parliament. Oppressed with actual impositions, and terrified with the certain prospect of increasing heavier burdens, the people could not receive a more satisfactory proof of the willingness of their representatives to grant them effectual relief, than by enacting, that none should have a power of laying those burdens who should have such an interest in increasing them as the contractors had.

The abuse of fraudulent contracts was one of the great causes of the public distress. Nothing thererfore could be more unfit, than that those who were the principal subjects of complaint should sit as comptrollers of their own conduct. On these strong grounds the bill was introduced into

into the Lower House. Here it met with no opposition. But the public were early prepared for the fate it was to prove by a speech of one of the Secretaries of State, among the Lords in a debate on the bill when it was first introduced into their House. He told the Peers, that the time was come, when the hereditary legislators of the realm should exercise the powers they were vested with from the constitution. A *phrenzy of virtue*, he said, began to shew itself in the House of Commons. The people *had run mad*, and the infection was gaining upon their representatives. It would therefore be the duty of the Lords to interfere in their controuling capacity, *to stand in the gap*, as he expressed himself, and to prevent the other branch of the Legislature from adopting a reformation that was only grounded on the visionary complaints of an over pampered people. We were little surprised, therefore, that it should have been suffered to pass through the Commons, without opposition. The odium of defeating this essential reform was evidently reserved for the Lords. Accordingly, on the 14th of April, when it was read to them for the second time, they did not blush to stand between their oppressed country, and this first step that was taken towards supporting the independency, integrity and virtue of Parliament. The privilege vested in them by the constitution, they availed themselves of in the most unconstitutional manner; in a question that related solely

solely to the interior regulation of the House of Commons. That intervention which they had so frequently refused to exercise for the preservation of their country, they now exercised, at the nod of the minister, for her destruction. At a time when the people were justly complaining of the destructive influence of the Crown, in a moment when the House of Commons had solemnly resolved that this influence should be diminished, they *stood in the gap*, they proved the ready instruments of the vindictive spirit of the minister, and executed the implacable vengeance he had denounced against the people.

If this country can possibly escape the present crisis; if ever she can hope to restore her constitution to her former spirit and energy, it will be recorded among her annals, with all the becoming pride of national integrity and honour, that a majority of the hereditary peers of England preserved themselves pure from so foul a reproach. Scotch peers, and ambitious prelates, pensioners and Lords of the bed-chamber, joined to the members of administration, and Lords in office, alone composed the degenerate number that rejected the bill.

Mr. Crewe's Bill for preventing Revenue Officers from voting at Elections.

This bill had its source in the very spirit of the constitution. It was introduced on this

this obvious principle, That, to prevent dependence within doors, the speediest method was to secure it without. If the *electors* are corrupted, we can have but little hopes of integrity from the *elected*. Both implicitly obey the mandate of the minister. The one nominates, the other vote in the same spirit.

That the revenue officers can scarce be said to have a franchise; that they can scarce be said to have a vote of their own; that they can in no instance support the candidate their conscience approves, without running the risk of losing their places, it is a fact too notorious to stand in need of proof. Who does not know that the members of the Cinque Ports, and of most of the boroughs on the sea-coast are the representatives of the minister and not of the people? The only possible remedy that could be applied to this evil, was to exclude those creatures of the minister from the right of voting. It was insinuated, that this was a violation of the franchises of the people. But this objection had been obviated by the respectable gentleman who introduced the bill. His only design was to have it established as a rule, that while men possessed offices so immediately under the controul of the minister, their right of voting for members to serve in Parliament should be suspended. If an act for that purpose should pass, there could not be a shadow of hardship to any individual. Every man would know on what ground he was to stand, and would have the option either

of not accepting the office, or of agreeing that his right of voting should be suspended while he held it.

But it was not to be supposed, that this strong fortress of Court influence would be suffered to be levelled to the ground. The minister flew to its assistance with all his force, and the bill was lost at the second reading, by a majority of twenty-six. The very vote that threw it out, was the clearest proof of the existence of the evil it was meant to remove. The representatives of excisemen and custom-house officers decided the question.

Mr. Dunning's Motions upon the Petitions.

These measures, which the independent gentlemen exerted all their powers to press upon the House, though they were bottomed on the prayers of the people, and tended effectually to redress their grievances, were not introduced, in consequence of any immediate motion, towards taking the petitions into consideration. This step was deferred till the 6th of April. The transactions of that day, when compared with the subsequent conduct of the commons, have fixed a stain on their journals which no time can efface.

Nothing could be more judicious than the manner in which Mr. Dunning opened this important business. The people had petitioned

tioned their representatives in a peaceable and constitutional manner. It was the undoubted duty of these representatives, to listen to what those who had sent them into parliament had so stated, to enquire into the facts alledged by them in their petitions, and if they were found to be true, to grant them immediate and effectual relief. The first step therefore to be taken, was to appeal to the House upon the truth of the first great allegation of the people. That once determined it would be easy to proceed to a consideration of the points on which they required relief.

With this view, Mr. Dunning moved,
 " that it was the opinion of the House, that
 " the influence of the crown had increased,
 " was increasing, and ought to be diminished."

This motion tied the House down at once to an explicit unequivocal decision. It was a resolution of fact, and required no argument. The notoriety of the universal prevalence of such influence, the allegation of one hundred thousand freeholders, an allegation exceedingly simple in itself, and which it was not likely the petitioners would have made, but upon thorough conviction, the conscience and feelings of every individual in the House, were the chief arguments of which the success of the motion was made to rest.

The only objection made to it by ministers, besides denying the fact, was, that it was an abstract proposition, and that such pro-

positions were never voted by Parliament. This assertion was proved to be false, and an instance to the contrary was given, from the reign of King William, an instance of a question that was voted though *immediately abstract*, which this motion by no means was. This was found to be expressly stated in the petitions, and Mr. Dunning had taken care to obviate the objection, by declaring that the question was designed to be the ground of other resolutions.

While the minister himself appeared distract'd, and evidently undecided about the mode of getting rid of the question, the Lord Advocate of Scotland boldly proposed to throw the business out at once, and by moving that the chairman of the committee leave the chair, to give an early decided negative to the prayers of the petitions.

This threw the House into a ferment. Such contemptuous treatment of the people, it was affirmed, could only have originated from one, whose political principles, as far as he has declared them in Parliament, are as foreign to the spirit of the English Constitution, as his accents are barbarous to an English ear.

The minister served to encrease the disorder. While the debate was confined to the motion before the House, he had observed a sullen sulky silence. But, as soon as Mr. Pitt, in a torrent of eloquence, charged him with the calamities entailed upon his

his country ; when he instanced his continuance in office, as the most indubitable proof that could be given, of the enormous influence of the Crown, and supported this assertion, by a glowing enumeration of all the transactions of his inglorious administration, his fullness gave way to violence and resentment. The justness of the reproaches, and the consciousness of his guilt, roused him out of his usual phlegmatic insensibility, and he burst out into such terms of illiberal invective, that an universal cry seemed to break from every part of the House, demanding that his words might be taken down.

This alarming discovery, of so general a change in the sense of the House, seemed to terrify him. He directed the Lord Advocate to withdraw his motion. But what this gentleman could not effect by force, he endeavoured to accomplish by stratagem. He moved an amendment, and put it as the main question, that “ *it is necessary now to declare,* “ *that the influence of the Crown had en-* “ *creased, is increasing, and ought to be di-* “ *minished.*”

He afterwards confessed, that this design, in moving this amendment, was to induce the House to reject the whole proposition. He was in hopes that the danger, which would threaten the minister, if the period of this increased influence should be fixed to the time of his administration, as it must be, by admitting the necessity of making such a decla-

tion

ration now, his friends would unite in the defence of their patron, and reject a motion, which from being general, was now become personally directed against the minister. But he was deceived in his hopes. The gentlemen in the opposition readily admitted an amendment, that so forcibly strengthened their original proposition, that justified so fully the application of the people to their representatives, from the necessity of the case, and that so clearly substantiated their allegations. The question was put with its amendment, and was carried by a majority of eighteen.

The principal allegation of the petitions being thus acknowledged, and admitted to be just, Mr. Dunning proceeded to establish another fundamental proposition. He moved, that it is the opinion of the committee, that it is competent to the House of Commons to examine into, and to correct abuses in the expenditure of the civil-list revenues, as well as in every other branch of the public revenue, whenever it shall seem expedient to the wisdom of this House so to do.

This proposition, the clearest and most indisputable that ever was drawn from the constitution, ministers endeavoured to negative. In the several debates on the clauses of Mr. Burke's bill, they had, some more, some less covertly, laboured to establish a contrary doctrine. They made repeated efforts to have it received as a maxim, that the King had an exclusive right to the monies settled on him by Parliament; that he had
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the same title to his civil list, which any private gentleman had to his estate, that it was as much his own, and that his purse was too sacred for the other parts of the Legislature to controul.

If such a doctrine were once established, there would be an end to the constitution. For what would be the necessary consequences of it? The King might convert his revenue to what purposes he should think proper; he might employ it to the destruction of the state, and the subversion of the constitution. Whatever abuses he might make of it, Parliament were to be mute spectators, and not make a single effort to prevent the mischief.

If under the restraint of a parliamentary power to inspect it, the abuses which were acknowledged to have sprung from its application were so extensive, where would the mischief end if this power was to be given up, and the House of Commons to increase the civil revenues in proportion as they had done of late years, merely on the requisition of the minister, without examination or account? But the supporters of that dangerous doctrine were forced to give it up, when it was thus explicitly put upon issue. Mr. Dunning's proposition was admitted without a division.

This resolution was followed by a motion of Mr. Pitt's, "That it is the duty of the House to provide, as far as may be, an immediate

"immediate and effectual redress of the abuses complained of in the petitions, presented to the House from the different counties, cities and towns, in the kingdom."

This question passed unanimously, and the several resolutions having been immediately reported, the committee broke up and adjourned to the 10th.

The proceedings of that day were equally favorable to the wishes and expectations of the people with those of the 6th. A motion of Mr. Dunning's for "securing the independency of parliament, and obviating any suspicion of its purity, by laying exact accounts before the House within seven days after the first day of every session, of such sum or sums of money as have been paid in the course of the preceding year to Members of Parliament out of the civil list, or any other part of the public revenue, to them, to their use, or in trust for them, or on any other account, specifying when or on what account such money was paid," passed with merely some observations on the part of the minister.

His second motion, of the same tendency, for excluding certain placemen, whose offices subjected them to the mandate of the minister, from holding seats in Parliament, was, after a strong contest, carried for the people, on a division of 215 to 213.

This appearance of repentant virtue in the Commons was received by the people with all the extravagance of unexpected joy, and

and the effusions of mutual congratulation. They received the vote of the 6th as a vote of atonement from their representatives, and gave a generous and implicit credit to the assurances they received of obtaining immediate redress for the grievances, of which it was acknowledged they had complained with justice. With the most unsuspecting confidence the counties assumed a milder tone. They withheld their associations. They adopted less resolute measures, in the certain hopes of procuring redress from those, whom they were happy to consider once more as the faithful guardians of their freedom and possessions.

And surely they had the strongest reasons to flatter themselves that they should be speedily delivered from the destructive system, and ruinous councils of a set of men, to whom they justly ascribed all their sufferings. For how did the two hundred thirty-three of their representatives, who voted in the majority of the 6th of April, stand pledged to them as gentlemen and Members of Parliament? They had acknowledged that *now*, under the actual direction and immediate auspices of those men, the corrupt influence of the Crown had increased to so alarming a degree, as to require an immediate and effectual check. With what face then could they ever after support the minister, who under the pressure of that vote stood condemned of having squandered the public treasures, and plundered the people in

acquiring and diffusing that influence? Was there upon record an instance of so flagitious a charge having been brought home to any administration, of so ignominious a sentence having passed upon any minister in all the annals of our history? And could the men who confirmed that charge and pronounced that sentence against his administration, be the persons to support him in office?

They affected to prove their zeal in the service of their constituents, and to recommend themselves to their future favor and support, by complying with the prayer of their petitions; and could they have the face to support the minister, who in every stage of that business, had withheld those petitions with all his weight and influence? who, when the fatal effects of his administration first compelled the freeholders of England to attempt this only expedient *they then had* to save themselves and their country from utter ruin, left nothing untried to stifle them in their birth, and to procure applications of a direct contrary tendency? who branded them with the opprobrious stigma of sedition, as the offspring of faction, and the last desperate effort of a contemptible party to force themselves into office? who, since their introduction into the House, had exerted all his powers in withholding every attempt to procure the object of their prayer, and in endeavouring to defeat every motion grounded on their complaints? and who required no other test

of the fidelity and attachment of his mercenaries, than to go through with him in those insulting proofs of his enmity to the people.

But while the distant counties indulged those flattering hopes on such probable and obvious grounds, those who were nearer the scene of action soon began to conceive other thoughts. The very day after he had been branded with this ignominious sentence he had the insolence to appear again before the House of Commons as the confidential servant of his Majesty, and the first minister of this country. His adherents, far from being dejected or depressed, assumed all the haughtiness of a triumph, and boastingly foretold to the friends of the people, that their majority should prove a rope of sand.

This unprecedented contempt of the authority of Parliament, and the subsequent accomplishment of this prediction, have induced many people to suppose, that the whole business of the 6th was a preconcerted measure between the minister and his creatures.

It was a sacrifice he permitted them to make to *the frantic virtue* of their constituents. Instead of injuring, it would serve his own cause. By voting that the Crown had acquired a corrupt influence, while administration was exerting all its powers to prevent such a vote from passing, they would give the most plausible proof of the falsity of the accusation. Could such an extensive and dangerous influence as was complained of, be consistent with an opposition to govern-

ment in so essential and delicate a point? Their constituents could not possibly expect a stronger proof of their integrity and independence, and must, on every future occasion, give them credit for voting according to their judgement and conscience.

True they had voted besides, that it was the duty of the House to give the petitioners some immediate and effectual relief. But this was an abstract question that led to nothing. By no construction could it be held as binding to any one precise, determined point. Though they had agreed to the proposition, yet they were still free to oppose any mode of reformation that might be proposed by its abettors. This measure might not please them; that measure might not come up to their ideas; they might withhold in the detail what they had promised in the gross.

Several observations that fell from the speakers on that side during the subsequent debates, tended very strongly to confirm those suspicions. The conduct of the trimming members was a still stronger confirmation. This expedient was the exact outline of their proceedings. They rejected every proposition that was offered, with a view of relieving the people to whatever objects it tended, or however framed, but never once proposed a single measure of their own that might acquit the engagement under which they stood pledged to their constituents.

If this be a true statement of the case, the senate of Rome, in her most degenerate days, when tyrants, who were a reproach to humanity, had reduced that once glorious assembly to the vilest and most contemptible depth of servility, never stooped to so foul a disgrace. Among all the indignities to which they submitted, they never consented to confess their own infamy by an authentic vote, and to inscribe that confession on their records with all the formalities of their legislative proceedings.

Others, indeed, upon better information asserted, that the loud clamours of the people, and the fears of an approaching election, had spread a real alarm among the members who did not owe their seats to the immediate gift of the treasury. These felt a momentary terror, and having once deserted from their colors, might, from the apprehension of a change of masters, have persevered in their defection, had not the ministers made such good use of the recess that was occasioned by the illness of the Speaker. This event took place while the committee for taking the petitions of the people into consideration were sitting. One of the most respectable members in the House, in a debate on the 18th of May, charged the minister with having employed that period in corrupting the members. To this alone he was indebted for the majority he had regained. If the charge was false, he was called upon by another member,

ber, equally respectable, to apply to the House to have the words taken down, and to bring the fact to discussion. But, added this gentleman, " he dare not. He knows the " charge to be too justly founded. If he " calls for proof, it can be substantiated in " his very teeth."

However the people may be disposed to determine on the cause of the apostacy, certain it is, that it appeared in the most shameless violation of all shame and decency, immediately on the meeting after this adjournment. The public, by this time, was prepared for the change. The minister could not contain his triumph on the success of his negotiations with the apostate members. His adherents took care to publish abroad the certainty they were in, that on the first sitting of the committee for the petitions, the opposition would prove to be what it was foretold it should prove a rope of sand. Under these impressions the supporters of the petitioners went down to the House on the 24th of April. They found their worst fears verified. A motion of Mr. Dunning's for giving some assurance to the people, that Parliament should not be dissolved or prorogued until proper measures should be taken by the House to diminish the influence, and to correct the other evils of which the petitions complained, and, as the House had acknowledged, with justice, was rejected by a majority of fifty one.

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The division on this motion completed the triumph of the minister, and determined at once the fate of the petitions. They were from that moment left at the mercy of an administration hostile in every point to the prayers of the people, with power to defeat every attempt of reformation by prorogation or dissolution. This power, as was then foreseen and foretold, they have not failed to exert in the most arbitrary and contemptuous manner. They first prorogued and then dissolved the parliament without a single step having been taken to fulfill the solemn engagement the House had entered into with their constituents.

After that day, the only notice that was taken of the petitions, was to add insult to injury. The minister seemed to take a pride in aggravating the public sufferings by a mockery of words. He affected to express the utmost difference to the demands of the people, and the greatest willingness to redress their grievances, while he defeated every attempt of the kind on the part of opposition, without ever substituting a single expedient of his own.

After that day he lorded in the house with his usual majorities. After that day he pursued the great objects of his system without fear or restraint. The sense of duty, the pride of consistency, the call of honour, the upraiding of conscience, the remembrance of the faith they had solemnly pledged to their

their constituents and to each other, were all sacrificed to his power by the apostates from the majority of the 6th of April. They supported him in his daring encroachment on a privilege, of which the constitution has been at all times most tender, and watchful. They authorised the King's troops to remain in a borough town during the time of election for members of Parliament, and established a precedent that will not fail to be improved in the blessed hands that proposed it. They countenanced the dangerous innovations he introduced into the system of army promotions, and sanctified the abuses by which the navy has been brought to its present disgraceful condition. They voted blindly and indiscriminately the enormous sums he demanded for the services of the present year, far beyond the most boundless profusion of all former periods, and enabled him to reject every application for accounts of the manner in which this plunder on the public should be employed. They joined with him in all his fallacious schemes of raising new and oppressive taxes * on the people, in open violation

* The annals of mankind cannot exhibit such a scene of ministerial imposition, and political seduction as the present first Lord of the Treasury has practised by his system of financing, since the commencement of the American war. A decrease of taxes, and a diminution of the public burdens was the ostensible pretext for entering on that accursed measure. These were the motives that first induced the country gentlemen to concur in the hostile resolutions that

lation and contempt of their petitions. In every measure he proposed they carried their complaisance beyond even their own former fervility

that had been formed in the cabinet against the devoted Colonists.

These Colonists, they were told, had been called upon to bear a proportionate Share of the heavy incumbrances, which, chiefly on their own account, had been brought upon the nation during the last war. A few ungovernable spirits at Boston had opposed this claim; but a little strenuous exertion, and the very sound of hostile preparations on our side would shortly break this turbulent temper; and the right of taxation would be admitted in such an extent as to establish a fund of productive lasting revenue.

The miseries that followed these fallacious promises need no enumeration.—But mark the conduct of our minister of finance, as the ruinous circle of, the war enlarged itself.

In the first two years, one of which was a year of declared hostilities, not a shilling did he borrow. A veil dark and impenetrable as that he threw over the dispositions and real sentiments of the Americans, was drawn over the expenditure, that it might not meet the eye of the public. By his management of the sinking fund, by disposing of it without the consent or authority of Parliament, by anticipating its produce; by the credit of the Bank, and by various shifts and expedients in the market of the unfunded debts, he contrived to let the last session of 1776 come nigh to a close before he applied to Parliament for the loan of two millions. To pay the interest, some trifling particulars were taxed, that affected a very small part of the people.

The next year, farther claims, and a new loan. But the people must be kept in the dark. A tax on servants and auctioneers, would not bear very hard on the mass of the public.

Another year; and again the same game. A tax upon houses, inconsiderable in itself, would only be felt by the opulent.

servility, and seemed anxious to make him ample attonement for the momentary virtue into which they were betrayed. They sunk even below the infamy with which they began their existance, and like hardened and desperate sinners, encreased in profligacy as their dissolution approached. In short I can venture to assert, and posterity, at least, will confirm the assertion, they have added to the annals of our Parliament, a series of the most disgracing, profligate, destructive proceedings that ever stained the journals of the Commons.

On the 8th of June, the sessions was concluded by a speech from the throne; and on the 1st of September, the Parliament was dissolved. Whether this be a blessing or not, must remain with the freeholders to deter-

A fourth year came, with still encreasing expences ; but the rich, and those who could indulge themselves in superfluous ease, were alone to suffer. Post chaises, and post horses were taxed.—In short a debt of upwards of twenty millions, drawing after it an interest of more than a million *per annum*, was artfully, and by stealth *slipped*, if I may be allowed the expression, on the public ; and when the upshot of the means proposed to raise the interest came to be examined, we found that the taxes were so delusive and unproductive, that they did not amount to one half of what they were taken for—Thus the taxes that have been this year laid on some of the immediate necessities of life are but the beginning of our miseries.—The people already complain of insufferable burdens, but what will it be when they find themselves obliged, not only to bear the pressure of new loans and encreasing expences, but to provide likewise for the deficiencies of years past which they were falsely told, had been born exclusively by the superiour classes,

mine.

mine. By the present choice of the representatives, that question, and others of equal importance, must be decided. A few weeks will prove how far the only hopes we had left of escaping the final ruin with which our constitution and state are threatened by a perseverance in the present system, are founded, or if the record of degeneracy must equally stigmatize the Parliament and people of England.

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